



Puppy Tails

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*As the moon goes to bed, the sun comes up
And here we meet a sleepy pup,
Who was walking through G-ville one bright sunny day,
Then saw The Villager and decided to stay.*

Determined to do more with his newfound talent than just spend the day bouncing up and down on the springy center of the trampoline, - though what a great way to fill the time it was! - Doodle Dog decided to expand his boingy boundaries a bit further than the backyard and set off down the sidewalk to see what new friends he could find to share what he had learned.

He didn't have to look long; just a few moments of floppy-eared scampering later the curious little puppy slowed his pace just a smidge so as not to collide right into a group of his favorite humans gathered in the very middle of the trail. Altering his pattering puppy path slightly, Doodle Dog quickly curved around the back of the crowd and slid to a stop to watch what seemed to be holding the children's attention. Patiently peeking from behind their ankles, the petite puppy peered through the fence of little legs as a boy with hair as yellow as the sunshine above them tossed a small rock over the nearest sidewalk square and waited until it skittered to a stop almost as suddenly as Doodle Dog had done. As the floppy-eared puppy could get a closer look, he now noticed a series of colorful gritty dust lines following the cracks in the sidewalk, making imperfect squares within the existing borders between the concrete. The



childlike frames surrounded each square, except where there were two smaller cubes drawn within one larger one, and all showcased a number written in the same youthful scrawl. Keeping an eye on the pebble's placement, the little boy pulled one foot up behind him and perched on the other, pausing for a moment to find his balance. His temporary pose reminded Doodle Dog of a flock of giant pink birds he saw in one of the books on his shelf that housed different kinds of winged creatures between its covers. Not waiting another second in case he would topple over, the little boy hopped to the first square and then the second, letting his upper foot swing down just for a brief touch when he reached the double cubes and then popped it right back up as though attached to a string in his back pocket. The pebbled rested just up ahead so he swiftly bent down, snatched up the smooth stone and skipped over that square entirely, hopping over it like a track star leaping over invisible hurdles... but ones just his size.

As the little boy reached the top of the design, turned around and made his way back to the beginning, the floppy-eared puppy found himself being nudged to the front of the crowd. Gone were the forest trees of leggy fence posts, gone was the coverage they gave him, and instead in their places was the excited smile of a little girl with curls the color of smashed strawberries in the summer and a sparkly stone of her own clasped in her palm. Soon she would have one eye focused on the flight of the granite fleck in her hand, but for the moment her gaze landed on the little puppy quietly observing the fun and his floppy ears partially concealing him from the view. It didn't take long for Doodle Dog to wiggle his way to her side and pick up a pebble previously minding its own business nearby. With a quick flick of her wrist, the little girl tossed the small rock down the sidewalk, watching carefully for it to choose a place to land. Doodle Dog followed her example, instead kicking his pebble with his paw and letting it bounce, dip and jump on its own before settling into the chalky edge of the middle square. The second it stopped rolling, the little girl took her cue and hopped on one foot up, over and past each square according to the rules of the game until she reached the point to retrieve her playing piece. That didn't LOOK too hard to do! Floppy ears flipped as a little curious puppy bounced his way onto the first square and to the next, but Doodle Dog remembered to follow the rules too and lift up one paw. Or would it be two paws? Better start with one first... Doodle Dog lifted up one of his back paws thinking that his tail should help make up for the fact he only had one rear paw now on the ground. Hopping on three paws seemed to work well enough and with a little balancing he made it all the way to where his pebble waited for him! All that twisting on the trampoline and stepping along on the river stones must have been good practice indeed. At least there wasn't any water to fall in this time, or a turning rope to tangle in while jumping on the concrete river that is the sidewalk. But then came the time to go back to the start. She made it look easy...

Once Doodle Dog gave himself a minute to size up the sidewalk squares spreading out ahead of him, the little floppy-eared puppy bravely lifted up his other back paw and tried to tilt forward on just his front legs! His nose nearly touched the ground but, one paw print at a time, the sort-of acrobatic (at least for now) Doodle Dog hopped, skipped and, well, wiggled and waddled too, to the beginning chalk mark. Just as he crossed the colorful line with his fetched pebble in his mouth, the flexible floppy-eared puppy fell forward from his fuzzy pawstand into the crowd where his favorite humans were all trying to imitate their favorite furry friend, even the part that meant landing in a giant, giggling pile of shared fun!